

Grimm Sounds—Away

By Anne Stone

Illustrations by
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From the Seasons

Rock musician Bob Grimm is walking happy these days: Young, talented and after many painful yet illuminating years of "growing up," he's quitting The Four Seasons (yes, The Four Seasons are alive and well) with whom he's been guitarist for the past nine months and is heading for London's Morgan Studios where he hopes to cut his first album.

"Here's my itinerary," he says, a gleam in his limpid green eyes, as he relaxes in the serene halls of SAVITRIA — a Baltimore commune which has been his spiritual home and refuge for some two years.

"I just have to do one more engagement with The Seasons up in Boston, some Italian benefit, with thousands of people. Frank Sinatra will be there. It's my job right now, my karma. But soon my karma will be somewhere else . . ."

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Bob Grimm stands still in the center of the sparsely furnished room, his guitar pressed close to his body. Eyes shut in concentration, head slanted toward the ceiling, he tries to think of the lyrics to "I Was Born In April" — a song he wrote six years ago when he was 19. He tunes his guitar, rolls his eyes and his body begins to gyrate. Chords roll off the instrument, filling the heavily incensed atmosphere; sound — a soft mellifluous sound — pierces the silence:

*Well now I don't want to bother you with
troubles of my own
But they ain't mine alone
I could be wrong
But don't laugh at me until you're sure
that what I got ain't what you're
lookin' for
And I knew by the way that they looked
at me that day
There ain't no use in tryin' to decide
Who oughta live and who oughta die
I ask you why,
I ask you why*

The song is over. The soothing harmonies linger in the ear. Grimm drops his guitar and glides into another room, one ornamented with Oriental rugs, potted plants, gilt-framed paintings and molded ceiling. Setting himself down in front of a dusty Victorian nine-foot piano, he goes into a beautiful and lyrical symbolic song:

*Dreamin', Dreamin', Dreamin',
Where do you go when you're dreamin'?
Ridin' Gliding
Where do you go spirals sliding?*

*Dreaming of anywhere
Wave to yourself
Your personal army
Comes down from the shelf
And creeps in your ear
And your eye and your heart
And plays your mind
As a finely tuned harp*

Grimm's music, with its cascading melodies and simple yet sentient lyrics, is far from the top 40 falsetto twanging of The Four Seasons. And his long brown pony-tailed hair, embroidered army jacket and colorful hippie garb is miles away from The Season's famed greasy pompadours.

His sound is an outgrowth and a reaction to the turbulent rock-ridden 60s: It tastes of The Band, Buffalo Springfield, Ritchie Havens, The Beatles, FOLK ROCK; it shuns Jefferson Airplane, Led Zeppelin, Steppenwolf, Canned Heat, HARD ROCK. Like James Taylor and the new breed of troubadours, he aims at personal songwriting; his works to be performed in an intimate quiet manner.

"James Taylor is a fine performer," admits Grimm. "He's mixed some beautiful tracks. But for me, music is the person and I don't know where Taylor's head's at. Elton John is another who's excellent technically — he's got fine chords. And, of course, I love The Beatles — George Harrison more than the others 'cause he's into spiritual material. But you know who convinces me? Beethoven. And Mendelssohn,

Bach, Mozart, Grieg . . . George Martin (who works with the Beatles) was smart enough to use strings and classical musicians in their tracks. Ah! Those subtle classical inflections!

"I wouldn't call my music popular — no electric deafening sound. Major keys for me are great healing sounds, builders on a mental and spiritual level. The minor key is more lunar, it gives off astral vibrations. It's on an emotional level. Writing a song is like meditating — I become one with all things. I dislike the rock concert thing. Very loud music is dangerous. You've gotta get to such a high decibel to get over the audience bedlam — all those people looking for sensual and emotional gratification. Adolph knew all about it!"

With calm confidence, Grimm continues: "Today, these singles — Steve Stills, etc. — are the big thing. It's the one-person concept. The super-star phase. The Jesus Christ age. God is the ultimate superstar. One day, there'll be the right person . . . But don't knock the group — a group working together can unify and heal. Just spare me those boring groupies and Cadillacs and weekend hippies. AND those businessmen who make money on the Aquarian age. I'm into esoteric things with my music. No ego trip. No superstar. But divinely inspired music."

While cynical of some of the contemporary rock scene, Grimm sees the innovations of the rock musical and the rock opera as refreshing and creative elements. In 1967 he even wrote a complete play along with a rock score.

"Then 'Hair' came along . . . they beat me to it. All I can say about 'Hair' is that I like it, period!" says Grimm, obviously peeved.

An astrology freak, Grimm takes seriously symbols, signs and cabalistic data. In fact, it was astrology and esoteric science that rescued him from severe depression back in 1966.

"I was in New York — in a strange head phase — smoking, drugging, tripping . . . balling. And divorced — my marriage flopped after 10 months. I was on a suicide trip. One night I was in my eighth floor room at the Waverly Hotel in the Village. I went to the window, about to jump when I noticed my guitar sitting in the corner.

"When I got to Baltimore a few weeks later — I had met The Progressions at Trude Heller's in New York and came with them — I met Bob Hieronomous, a weird hippie cat. I was just a sub-culture stereotype then. Bob and I rapped for 15 hours. He introduced me to many esoteric truths. Through meditation, I started to see my purpose, my identity. I became involved in mystery teachings and meditation groups. I unfolded to myself as a musician. I saw that I could be a channel for higher forces.

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Both my guitar and me had to reveal artistically some universal truths to people, to tie all things together, to make them one. A human is a reactor—I write music and purify myself. I do this with meditation. I feel the energy going through me—making chain reactions—then manifesting itself in my music. I have to go into myself, go in, go out, go in.”

As he gesticulated, he murmured: “Within you is without you. I know my instrument well (Grimm often introduces his guitar as his wife). I’m not perfect . . . I’m trying . . .”

Grimm was born 25 years ago in Elizabeth, N. J., and by the time he was 17 had gone through four different high schools in places as diverse as Vermont, Arizona and West Palm Beach. He attributes his pneumatic, peripatetic youth to his Scorpian father (“Scorpions are active, going through many transitions”) and his Gemini mother (“Gemini are flexible, always into changing”).

“My father was a free-lance photo-journalist in sports and wavered from nature-consciousness, hunting and fishing to business and making money. I learned some harsh lessons, some good lessons.”

His interest in music stems perhaps from his father who was once a drummer and who continuously played Benny Goodman, Sammy Kaye and all the Big Band records. After high school, he spent his first winter as a full-time ski instructor and the following summer as a full-time lifeguard.

Beatlemania was then gaining momentum and Grimm remembers belonging to his own little band “abominable in a musical sense” and those days of Budweiser and ’56 Fords. At Castle State Teachers’ College in Vermont, where he lasted a mere two years, he found himself less interested in academia than in chicks, rock and song writing. “I was going to class five days a week and playing in a band six days a week . . . it was crazy to continue in that reactionary school.”

Grimm keeps a log of these days and also of thoughts, poems, songs and dirty stories. He frequently rereads it. “I like to

document my experiences so I can plan my evolutionary course, my cycles of growth. Nineteen Sixty-Six, the year I got married, is the most significant log, I think. From it, I’ve taken ideas for songs. It was a revelation period. It’s beautiful to read and shaming to read. Sometimes I’ll say: ‘What a child.’ But I’m always growing. I enhance this through meditation and music.” It was also in ’66 that he came to Baltimore, where he managed to play in practically every major club within the city limits: The Tomfoolery, Venus Club, Judge’s, Mardi Gras.

From Light, a group he joined four years ago, he’s performed with such ensembles as A Taste, Karyn, The Last Our, Overhead Door Company, Cyclones, Berets . . . the list goes on infinitely.

“A lot’s happening in Baltimore,” smirks Grimm fondly. “It’s not a hick city. People here are getting it together. I hate the underground stereotype bands’ and there are a few. But then there’s Flow, an incredibly talented group which is the second band at the Mardi Gras Club. Trude

Cooper is another cool chick and sings with Sun Country in Washington. And then The Grin, whose guitarist worked for Neil Young. There ARE good people . . .”

After dragging his soul through local clubs and groups of the Aquarian Age, Grimm encountered Bob Gaudio of CBS and was offered work as a back-up musician on tour with The Four Seasons. When Season Tommy De Vito recently left, Grimm sailed into his place. “I really learned from them—about entertainment and show business, about aspects of communicating with a mass audience. Too bad, they didn’t learn from me . . . When I was in London with them, on BBC’s Top of the Pops, I ran into the guys at Morgan Studio who were excited about my OWN work and style. And when we do the album over there it’ll be a studio effort—all of us working as one, unified. I’ll be criticized and I’ll be glad. It’s exciting.”

Although Bob Grimm does not believe in LUCK (“Nothing happens because of luck, we all shape our own paths”), he certainly—along with much hard work—has had it. The future is ahead of him. The future is GRIMM! ■

